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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, July 24, 1934.

Hello Folks: While that wonderful blueberry pudding that Miss Van Deman so generously provided on last Tuesday is still in my mind, there are one or two points in connection with our blueberry program that I want to elaborate upon a trifle today. The first is that matter of the production of the improved blueberries and I want to make it clear that for the present at least more of these improved varieties are being grown than can be sold at a price that will yield a reasonable return above costs of production. The blueberry growers are not looking for additional markets but I think as discriminating people learn the merits of these splendid new varieties the demand will increase. Under present conditions I would not advise anyone to go into blueberry culture on a very large ~~scale~~ but if they embarked in this interesting field at all to sort of feel their way.

The other point that I want to bring out is the difference between the common huckleberry and the true blueberry. You folks who were listening last Tuesday probably heard Dr. Coville say that the huckleberry has ten seeds arranged in a ring around the center also that these seeds have a covering or shell that crackles between your teeth and produce a very unpleasant sensation. The true blueberry on the other hand has about forty seeds but these seeds are so soft and do not have a husk so they are not noticeable and the berries appear to be seedless. In the future when you eat huckleberries, or blueberries you will be able to distinguish between the two and when you eat real blueberry pie, or pudding you will thank Dr. Coville for giving the world these new varieties of blueberries.

In case any of you want to plant a few of the improved blueberries for home use, Dr. Coville can tell you where the plants may be obtained, but remember that they can be grown only on the type of peaty, acid soil that he described last Tuesday. That is the reason that blueberries have not succeeded as a garden fruit, for any soil that is of the right consistency and chemical reaction to grow good garden crops simply will not grow blueberries.

That leads to the second part of my short talk today and I want to remind you that some type or kind of small fruit can be grown in every section of this country. This drought situation over a part of the country threatens to wipe out most of the plantings of strawberries, raspberries and other small fruits. Blackberries will perhaps stand the drought better than most small fruits but they tell me that even the blackberries are turning brown and withering in some sections. There is really very little that we can do about it, watering is out of the question in most

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cases but mulching around the plants with partially rotted straw will help to pull the plants through. Getting the old cans out as soon as they are through fruiting will also reduce the drain upon the soil moisture. In the case of strawberries, leaving the old mulch around the plants and simply thinning out the plants by hand also pulling all weeds will help.

Evergreens and shrubbery planted around the house foundations and in the borders are suffering for moisture in many cases, in fact many of the plants set within the past year have died. The addition of a little water will do wonders in pulling the plants through, especially if the watering is supplemented by the addition of a fairly heavy mulch around the plants. Of course where you have plenty of water and can water the shrubbery about twice a week you can keep it green and growing, but even with a plentiful supply of water a mulch around the plants will be a mighty big help.

Now my last point today has to do with lawns. I am told that the lawns are just about burned up in the area where the drought is at its worst. I want to tell you though it is wonderful what punishment blue-grass and some of the other lawn grasses will take and still pull through. I've seen the sod so dry and the grass plants so burned up that they would crackle when you walked upon them and yet when the rains came the grass revived and greened up in no time. I have heard authorities on lawns go so far as to recommend that no water be applied to lawns during severe drought periods. I would scarcely subscribe to that but I would say that it were better to apply no water than to apply a small amount. In other words if you water your lawn give it a thorough soaking that will go down to the grass roots and don't sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle and only wet the tops of the grass.

Lawn grasses are very greatly injured by being walked upon when the ground is very dry. Keep off the lawn during dry periods, the dead tops of the grass will form a mulch or shade to protect the crowns and roots of the grass plants but where the lawn is walked upon and ground into a powdery dust the grass is pretty apt to be killed. If you can not protect your parched lawn in any other way place a temporary fence around it to keep people off. Dogs playing on a lawn will do great damage during dry periods. It is an old saying that "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and this drought will pass and our lawns and gardens will again be green and beautiful.